THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • SATURDAY • APRIL 25, 2026 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 24 • LATE CITY EDITION

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1992-1997

When the Kuki-Naga conflict was at its peak, claiming over 1,000 lives

MANIPUR BLEEDS AGAIN AS FRESH KUKI-NAGA TENSION LEAVES 3 DEAD

Three persons were killed in two separate incidents of firing between the armed groups of Manipur's rival tribal communities Kukis and Nagas on Friday

Houses set on fire, many suffer injuries

- Security forces recovered two bodies from Mullam village, hours after a fierce exchange of fire between militants. Some houses were set on fire and several persons were injured
- In a separate incident, a youth was killed allegedly in an ambush by militants near Sinakeithei village in Ukhrul district on Friday morning | P12

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AAP-ration Lotus in RS as Chadha, 6 others join BJP

Cross two-thirds mark to duck anti-defection law's disqualification

ANUP VERMA AND HARPREET BAJWA @ New Delhi/ Chandigarh

THE AAP's Parliamentary Party in the Rajya Sabha imploded on Friday with seven of its 10 members, led by Raghav Chadha, breaking away and merging with the ruling BJP.

It came days after the party axed Chadha as its parliamentary party chief. Ironically, Ashok Mittal, who replaced Chadha as the AAP's head in the Upper House, too bolted. The other defectors were Sandeep Pathak, Swati Maliwal, Rajinder Gupta, Vikram Sahney and former cricketer Harbhajan Singh. They comfortably crossed the two-thirds criteria for defection, leaving the AAP shell-shocked.

If Rajya Sabha Chairman C P Radhakrishnan approves the merger, the BJP's strength will go up from 106 to 113, which is 10 short of a simple majority in the 244-member House. As for the post-merger NDA, its strength of 146, including nominated members, is 17 short of two-thirds majority. Two-thirds majority is needed to pass Constitution amendment bills.

AAP Rajya Sabha MPs Raghav Chadha, Sandeep Pathak and others arrive to meet BJP president Nitin Nabin, before their merger in New Delhi on Friday | PARVEEN NEGI

Justifying his defection, Chadha said, "The AAP that I gave 15 years of my life has stepped away from honest politics. I was the right man in the wrong party. I am moving away from the party and going close to people. Today, the AAP is corrupt and compromised."

A livid AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal said, "People should remember the seven names."

Their exit will have far-reaching ramifications for the ruling AAP in Punjab, where assembly election are due next year. The state government is already facing anti-incumbency.

Political analyst Dr Jagrup Singh Sekhon blamed it on AAP's structural flaw. "Everything revolves around Kejriwal, which is not desirable in the political setup," he said.

AAP implosion

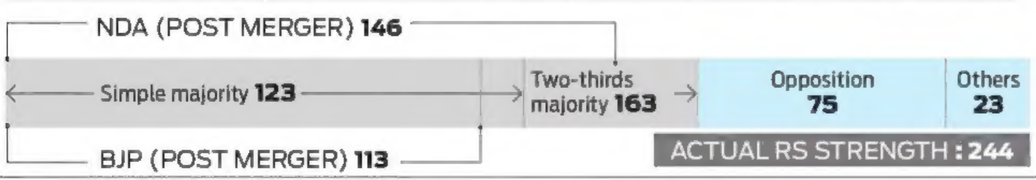
Feb 2026: Early signs of AAP differences over parliamentary strategy, issue prioritisation

April 2: Raghav Chadha axed as AAP's deputy leader in RS; Ashok Mittal named replacement

April 3-10: Chadha revolts, AAP friction deepens

April 24: Chadha resigns from AAP, joins BJP along with six other RS MPs

POST MERGER, NDA 17 SHORT OF TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY



SC internal quota implemented within 15%

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI @ Bengaluru

CLAIMING it to be a historic decision, the state government on Friday decided to implement internal reservation for Scheduled Castes (SCs) with a quota matrix of 5.25% each to SC (left)-A and SC (right)-B and 4.5% for Bhovi, Lambani, Koracha, Korama, 59 nomadic castes and others - C, splitting up the 15% quota in recruitment.

Facing a severe backlash from the communities as some were against internal quota, except SC left, the Congress government ultimately took a decision as any further delay could have cost the ruling party dear.

A special cabinet meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, decided to throw the 15% quota open to all the three (A, B and C) categories, allowing them to compete with each other for posts. This means all the 101 SC castes have a free run at jobs, especially Group A and B posts, like assistant professors, assistant engineers etc. The government move will spark a debate as internal quota will now become irrelevant, said experts. The cabinet seems to have taken note of objections raised by organisations of certain communities, arguing that it would be injustice to them if the internal quota is implemented for SCs for few jobs. But Social Welfare Minister Dr HC Mahadevappa defended the move, saying it will create the SC general option on the model adopted by the Andhra government. CONTINUED ON: P4

RBI cancels licence of Paytm Payments Bank

BENN KOCHUVEEDAN @ Mumbai

THE Reserve Bank of India on Friday directed Paytm Payments Bank to wind up operations and cancelled its licence with immediate effect. In a statement, RBI said it cancelled the banking licence as the entity consistently failed to meet regulatory requirements.

The move comes two years after the regulator imposed business curbs on Paytm Payments Bank over violations, including lapses in customer due diligence. The order follows years of regulatory friction and persistent non-compliance.

"The affairs of the bank were conducted in a manner detrimental to the interest of its depositors, thereby not complying with regulatory norms. The general character of the management of the bank is prejudicial to the interest of depositors as also the public interest," RBI said in a statement. P7

ARAGHCHI IN PAK, US TEAM EN ROUTE

DAY 56 | WAR WATCH

AGENCIES @ Islamabad/Tehran

IRAN's foreign minister **Abbas Araghchi** reached Pakistan late on Friday night, rekindling hopes of a peace deal to clear the war clouds over Gulf skies.

While Iran's official version for the visit is "bilateral consultations", Araghchi is expected to discuss with Pakistani interlocutors US-Iran ceasefire and ways to de-escalate the conflict.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt confirmed that US President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner will leave for Pakistan on Saturday.

It was not immediately known if Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who led the earlier delegation to Pakistan on April 11, also accompanied Araghchi to Islamabad.

Araghchi will fly to Muscat and then Moscow after his engagements in Islamabad.

Reports said Araghchi will hold talks with the Pakistani mediators, which will set the stage for talks with the US.

This comes a day after the US issued shoot-to-kill orders on Iranian boats laying mines in Strait of Hormuz.

On Friday, the US military said it has sent the third aircraft carrier to the Gulf. This is the first time since the 2003 Iraq war that three carriers are deployed in West Asia.

CET ROW

College staff ask three students to remove janivara

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

DESPITE training college authorities frequently about dos and don'ts, warning them and issuing guidelines about frisking students during the Common Entrance Test (CET) 2026, three students were forced to remove their janivara (sacred thread) by the staff of a college in Koramangala on Thursday, the first day of CET.

The college has suspended three staffers in connection with the incident.

The parents of the three students filed a complaint at the Madiwala police station on April 24 morning.

Anand S Theertha, Nakul H and Anirudh R Rao are the three students who were forced to remove their 'janivara', despite refusing and arguing with the college authorities.

CONTINUED ON: P2

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